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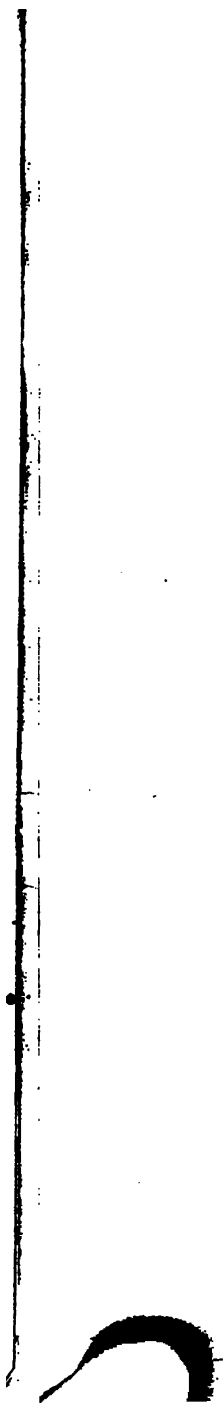
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Mary T. Montrose

PHILLIPS BROOKS

AN APPRECIATION

BY

WILLIAM REED HUNTINGTON, D.D., D.C.L.

RECTOR OF GRACE CHURCH NEW YORK

PRINTED BY REQUEST

NEW YORK

1893

28613568.26.80

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Press of J. J. Little & Co.
Astor Place, New York

PHILLIPS BROOKS.*

II. SAMUEL, iii. 36. Whatsoever the king did pleased all the people.

THERE was a wonderful personal charm about David, son of Jesse the Bethlehemite. He drew people towards him they knew not how or why. The men who fought under his banner would have given their lives for him. The son of his enemy became his dearest friend. Even when dark days began, and calumny was in the air, and Ahithophel took counsel against him, and Absalom was in revolt, his power of fascination continued what it had always been ; even then it was enough for him to break silence, and he " bowed the heart of all the men of Judah, even as the heart of one man."

Doubtless there were many of his contemporaries and associates who sought, for their own satisfaction, to analyze the secret of his charm.

* A sermon preached in Grace Church, New York, on Septuagesima Sunday, January 29, 1893, by the Rector.

"Is it his personal presence?" they asked. "There is a marvellous majesty about that. He is, as old Samuel said when first he found him among the sheepfolds, 'fair of eyes and goodly to look to.' But somehow this does not seem to account for the whole of his exceptional attractiveness. Saul, his rival, is also 'goodly to look to,' 'from his shoulders and upward higher than any of the people,' but Saul, with all his dignity of presence, cannot storm men's affections as David does. Is it then his rhetorical gift that helps him, his power of making psalms and giving such glad utterance to them when made that those who listen find themselves saying to themselves: 'I heard a voice from heaven'? Yes, doubtless that is part of it, and yet it is scarcely credible that that can be the whole of it. There are others who make spiritual songs as skilfully as he, others who open their dark sayings upon the harp, and do it well; but they are not David. He stands apart from all of them."

And so men speculated and speculated, but they never found out the secret they sought to track, and the reason why they failed was this: the power of the man was a composite

power ; it lay not in this or in that one particular faculty or endowment, but in a happily tempered alliance of traits and aptitudes rarely seen in combination. The bodily, the intellectual, the ethical, and the spiritual attractions were all fused in one great glowing personality, and the attempt to disentangle the various rays of influence was hopeless. The only thing to do was to love David for what he was, and to let it go at that.

Last Sunday, while you and I were worshipping here, and I was talking to you about the largeness and the comprehensiveness of the Church of Christ, there lay dying, though those about him seem scarcely to have suspected it, one who, like David, combined the regal and the prophetic gifts—king of men and seer of God. At daybreak on Monday he was gone—gone into the unseen—given what most he coveted, the freedom of the eternal city—Phillips Brooks was dead.

Then there broke forth, first from the historic town where he had lived his high and blameless life, and then from the whole land wheresoever the tidings fell, one great cry of sorrow—Phillips Brooks was dead. Only two deaths within the memory of men now living

have occasioned, in this country, so widespread, so catholic a lamentation. In it all sorts and conditions of men took part. "If you are looking for Christian unity," said a friend to me in Boston on the morning of the funeral, "you will see more of it to-day than you have ever seen before, or are likely soon to see again." And so it was. In the long procession that filed past the body as it lay in state some one casually noticed a poor colored woman and next after her a Roman priest. This was but a sample of what it all was like. As Dr. Donald, the new rector, after the formal solemnities within the church were ended, stood on the outer steps and, in the presence of the great throng filling Copley Square, spoke his words of thanksgiving to Almighty God for what the dead bishop had been permitted to say, to do, and, most of all, to be, one could not but be reminded of that far-reaching benediction which in old times used to be given annually from the balcony of St. Peter's, "*Urbi et Orbi.*" Yes, people who by no method known to us could have been persuaded to agree upon a formula of faith, found themselves believing in unison about a person. Creedless some of


them doubtless were, in almost every sense of the word, yet lingered there, even in these, enough of the faith faculty to enable them to say: "I believe in that sort of man." Oh that the theologians would both perceive and know that even this much of assent to Christian dogma is something worth. Believing in a Christian man is no slight step towards believing in the misunderstood Christianity that lies behind the man.

Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of Phillips Brooks. It is fitting that we do something more than simply dwell upon the circumstances of his death and burial. Let us make a serious attempt to appreciate the great gift our heavenly Father gave us in him, and through his preaching. I shall speak of him as man and as minister, and this is the true order, for he was born a man, and he was made a minister.

First, then, as respects the man, let me say this, that it is absurd to minimize the advantage he enjoyed by virtue of what we blindly call natural gifts. He was, to start with, magnificently endowed, and this is just one of those things for which we are to thank God when we are thinking of all that he was

enabled by help of these same gifts to say and to do. Virtue went out of him at every touch, yet was the treasure ever full and fresh; it seemed exhaustless. The tired men and women, toilers with hand and brain, professional men, shop-girls, merchants, art-students, college undergraduates, who surged into Trinity Church Sunday after Sunday, year in and year out, drank, as from a well of life, his words of healing and of cheer. They are talking of a bronze statue in his honor; I half believe that a fountain would be the more congruous monument.

It is nonsense to talk as if any man, if only he were sufficiently in earnest and sufficiently single-hearted, could accomplish what this man accomplished. Eye, stature, voice, physical staying power, then, more interiorly, a quick imagination, a keen insight into resemblances, a strong mastery over words—you may call these natural gifts if you please, but they all count, and they all ought to count, in making out the inventory of a man's qualifications for usefulness. Phillips Brooks had but to stand up before an audience and let himself be seen, and the day was won. There are hundreds, yes, thousands, of



priests and preachers at work to-day in various parts of Christendom, who are every whit as earnest, as devout, as sincere, as laborious, as unselfish and as whole-souled as this man was, but for some reason—possibly because, for most of them, the temptations which accompany great natural gifts would be likely to overmaster that in them which is more excellent still—the gifts have been withheld, the Heavenly Goodness would not run the risk. Those are rare men who, without peril to themselves, can be trusted with such a stewardship as this man has just fulfilled. But why call them natural gifts? If John the Baptist's doctrine, that a man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven, be sound, all these various excellencies of which man has proven himself capable, whether endowments of body, mind, or soul, are not nature-given, but God-given. Do you suppose that it was at hap-hazard that Saul of Tarsus was singled out for the work he had to do? Would it have answered just as well if some other young Pharisee, some other pupil of Gamaliel, had been selected to be struck down in the midst of a journey, and suddenly converted from persecutor to apostle? Not


such was the interpretation put upon the facts by Jesus Christ. "Go thy way," said the Voice to the timid Damascus disciple who hesitated about baptizing so very fiery a neophyte, "Go thy way, he is a chosen vessel unto me to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." Yes, God Almighty picks his men. Saul of Tarsus lacked certain powers and grievously mourned over his lack of them, but, nevertheless, he had in him that which made him the chosen vessel, that which made him the one man who could best do the one thing his great Employer wanted to have done. "This one thing I do."

It is seldom given us to see such a striking correspondence between a man's inborn aptitudes and abilities and the special task appointed to him as was seen in the case of Phillips Brooks. The greater part of his life-work was destined to lie in a community noted, perhaps, most of all for the admiration which it bestows upon intellect as such; a community originally dominated by Puritan thought and feeling, but now for the space of almost three generations alienated in great measure from that earlier faith.


That which survives of the Puritan tradition in Boston is a keen appreciation of high character, and a belief that piety is none the worse for having intelligence behind it. Religious beliefs die hard, and often it happens that those who have ostensibly thrown away some great dogma of the faith are found clinging with admirable tenacity to the moral standard which it was the intent of the old dogma to vivify and support. One may repudiate in words the divinity of our Lord, and yet, all the while, feel towards Him a love and a devotion so close akin to worship as to be almost indistinguishable from it. You and I may think that such love and devotion are not likely to prove hereditary and permanent in a society which rejects the great dogmatic pronouncements of the Christian ages—but let that pass; I am speaking of historical facts, not of theological premise and conclusion, and the fact is as I have stated it, the community in which this man was set down by the providence of God to exercise his great gifts was a community which, above all else, honored intellectual brilliancy and ethical distinction. Near by the city stood an ancient and powerful university, peopled with the flower of the

nation's youth, and itself the supreme embodiment and living symbol of the ideas and the ideals to which I have referred. And what was the result in this regard of bringing the man and the place into conjunction? Let those answer who on Thursday last watched the coffin borne down the aisle of Trinity Church on the shoulders of eight Harvard students. Let those answer who, at Cambridge, a little later in the day, saw the funeral procession deflected from its course that it might pass through an avenue of young men stretching in double ranks from one gate of the college yard to the other. Probably never since the university was founded has any minister of religion received from the undergraduates a tribute such as that ; for it was no make-believe demonstration ; collegians are not given to that sort of thing ; it meant gratitude.

But it has been alleged, I will not say by his enemies, for I cannot believe that the man ever made an enemy, properly so-called ; it has been alleged by those who grossly and grievously misunderstood him that all this unbounded popularity was due to his having set at naught the dogmas and the traditions



of the church whose member and whose minister he was. Perhaps it would suffice if I were to meet this by simply citing the judgment passed upon that question eighteen months ago. But I should like to do more than this. I should like, if I may, to point out the why and wherefore of the misunderstanding. Some minds are by nature analytical and some synthetic. Some intellects enjoy parcelling out truth into its component parts, just as a botanist pulls a flower to pieces that he may the better understand it; others would rather contemplate the object of their study in its wholeness, eager most of all to catch and to appreciate the total effect. The one temper is that of the metaphysician, the other that of the poet and the artist. Each type of mind has its value in connection with religion, but it is hard for the men of the one make to do justice to the men of the other. The powerful intellect of Phillips Brooks was not of the dogmatic bent. Had it been, he never could have done the work he did, for religion in Boston had suffered in times past from overmuch dogmatizing, and men were weary of that vein, they thought of it as worked out. But this new teacher, himself



essentially a poet, came to them holding up splendid pictures of truth. "I do not care to argue it out with you," he seemed to say, "only look, and see."

Surely there is something to be said for that method. If I may instance John the Baptist once more, I would remind you that that was his way. "Behold the Lamb of God!"—that was all he said, but it sufficed; the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. John the Baptist might have gone into an argument about the Messiahship, he might have elaborated a theodicy of the Atonement, but no, he knew that seeing was believing, and so he simply said, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

It has been alleged, for example, that Bishop Brooks did not inculcate from his pulpit the doctrine of the incarnation, or God manifest in the flesh. If, indeed, this cardinal doctrine of the Gospel is only properly taught when linked to the observance of a complicated "sacramental system," the device of the pre-Reformation schools, then it is true that this great master of religion did not teach it. What he did do was to set forth the incarnation by delineating in its length, and breadth,

and depth, and height, that perfect manhood to assume which the eternal Son humbled Himself to be born of a virgin. If there be any better method of compelling homage to the God-Man, what is it?

That was Phillips Brooks's method, he cured spiritual blindness by persuading men to open their eyes and look. He had a way of lighting up the whole landscape with a word. A critic of his style has remarked that he was sparing in his use of illustrations. Nothing could be further from the fact; almost every fibre of his discourse quivers with metaphor. To be sure we do not find in his writings much of that crude sort of illustration which depends upon "as" and "so." He avoids simile, technically so-called, but so quick, so vivid, so intense is his own strong personality that he seems to project personality even into dead material things, till every common bush becomes "aflame with God." He packs into an epithet more wealth of illustration than common writers spread over a sentence, and makes a single adjective tell us a whole parable.

But we are letting our thoughts drift into the literary current. There is no time for

that. We must stick to graver matters, the things of conscience and of the soul.

One of this man's great powers for good was his entire freedom from self-consciousness. There is a modesty which is for ever disparaging self and loudly deprecating praise. His was not of that sort. There is no evidence that he thought meanly of what he said and did. Had he not considered his sermons worth reading he would not have printed them. But where his modesty showed itself was in his apparently complete ignorance of his own supremacy. It was the hardest thing in the world to persuade him to talk about himself, and as for palming off upon him the commonplaces of flattery I fancy that few tried it a second time. In fact, there was only one thing finer than his way of meeting adulation, and that was his way of bearing calumny. Shall we ever forget the dignified silence he maintained all that long summer while voices many, some of them angry and some of them bitter and some of them shrill, were making war against him? It was grand. He had nothing to take back. His words were before the world. If he had spoken evil, let witness be borne to the evil. If he had denied an article

of the faith, let the accusation be made good. If he had taught other than the Church teaches, let it be shown when and how.

It was not an angry silence, nor a haughty silence, nor the silence born of pique ; it was the silence of simple, quiet, unobtrusive dignity, the silence of the

“ promontory of rock,
That compassed round with turbulent sound,
In middle ocean meets the surging shock,
Tempest-buffeted, citadel-crowned.”

There are some who, out of love for Phillips Brooks the preacher, regret that he ever allowed himself to become Phillips Brooks the bishop. I cannot share that feeling. His episcopate, short though it was, has to my eyes the look of a coronation. The end was near, but before it actually came it was well that he, who had shown himself to so many as brother in Christ, should be named also father in God.

It was well for two reasons. During that all too short tenure of the highest office in the Church's gift he gave open evidence of possessing traits of character with which, in earlier years, he had been credited only by the few who knew him intimately. A certain ten-

derness towards infirmity came out in him, and the large tolerance which as a preacher he had advocated became more and more conspicuously, as the months went by, his rule of daily life. Those who had always admired him became attached to him, and what had been mainly wonder deepened into love. I say this of his clergy. When the word went round that he was dead no differences were left. They were all of one mind then. They knew that he had loved them and that they loved him.

"O Bishop," I can imagine one of them exclaiming,

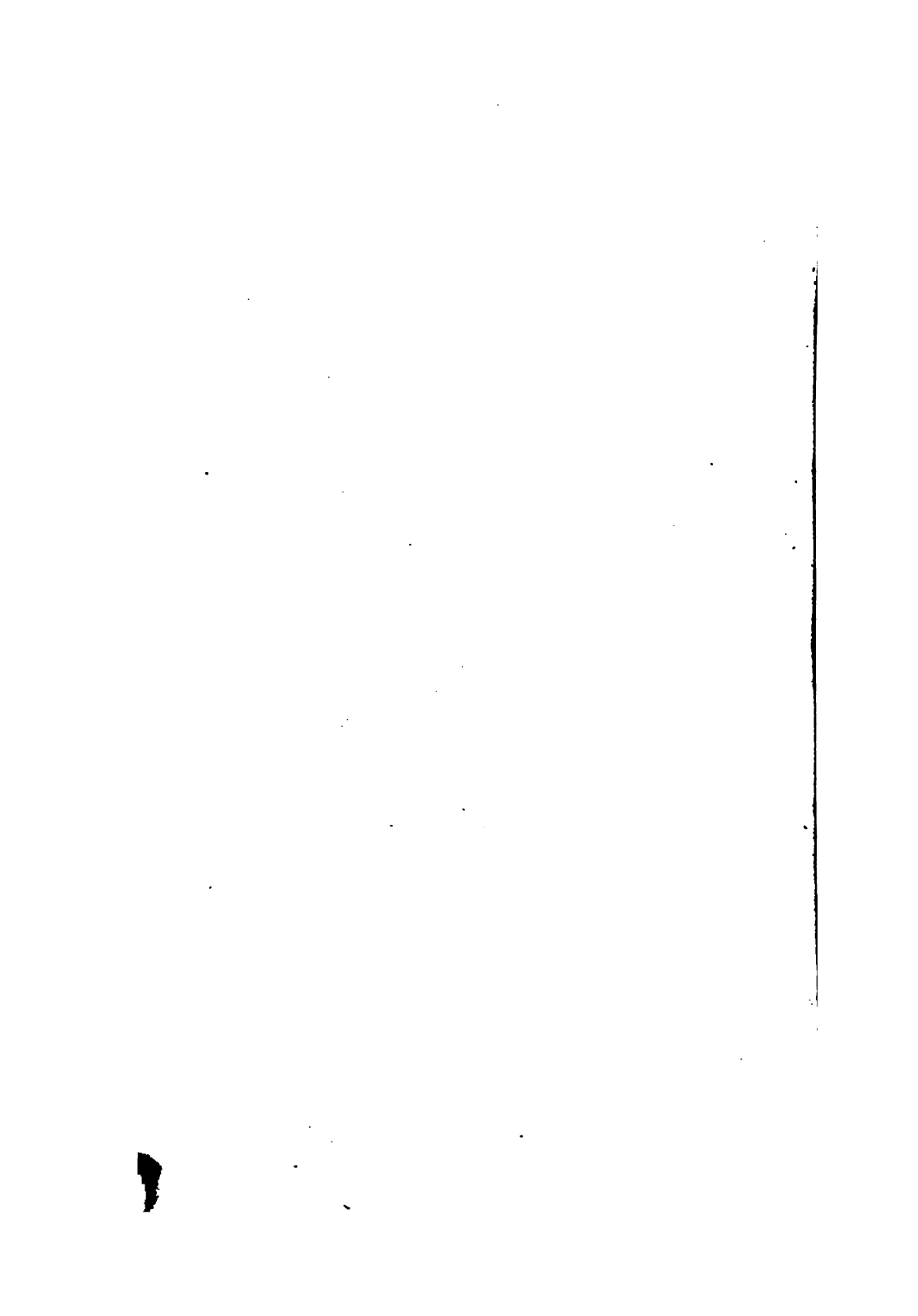
"now thy brows are cold,
I see thee what thou art, and know
Thy likeness to the wise below,
Thy kindred with the great of old."

But over and above his relation to his clergy there was his relation to the people. It was worth while making him a bishop if only to have brought out that, so giving proof of what worthy interpretations and applications a great historic office admits. We come back to our text: "Whatsoever the king did pleased all the people." Find your true king, and the people are bound always and every-

where to be pleased. There is a curious usage in the Church of the mother country with respect to the two sees of Canterbury and York. The Archbishop of York enjoys the title of Primate of England; but the Archbishop of Canterbury is "Primate of all England." It is no disparagement to the greatness and the goodness of his four predecessors in office to affirm that, while they were Bishops of Massachusetts, Phillips Brooks was the first to become Bishop of all Massachusetts.

Dear friends, may the fact that he was such prove the harbinger and foretoken of a day when, centred in the Saviour, that Great Shepherd and Bishop of all souls, the whole Church shall find itself at peace.

And, O strong soul, wherever among the habitations of God thou dwellest now, think not we ever shall forget thee; for the years are impotent to deaden the echoes of such a voice as thine, and many waters cannot quench love.



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